



# Parachute Digital

Guiding you through the digital landscape

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# THE ESSENTIAL NEED TO KNOW SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES LARGE & SMALL

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## About this book

In this book you are going to first learn the basics about Social Media and social networking. I'll help you understand what type of websites and content make up Social Media, what the benefits are and how Social Media differs from other types of digital media. I will also give you some useful examples of how other businesses are currently using Social Media. Then in the second half of this book you will learn four very important things to take into consideration and remember when you or your agency are planning a Social Media strategy.



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Shanelle Newton Clapham is a Digital Marketing Strategist, blogger and Founder of Parachute Digital.

Parachute Digital provide digital marketing consulting services including mobile and website strategy, content marketing (including social media), digital media channel planning and tracking & reporting validation. So basically, we help businesses become online ready and then we guide them through the digital landscape. Our digital stewardship helps to ensure their customers get the best possible online user experience and the business maintains a strong return on digital marketing investment.

Shanelle has more than 8 years experience in the internet marketing industry in Sydney and more broadly in the UK and the Americas. Shanelle has been a part of the digital success for some of our biggest brands, such as; Telstra BigPond & its various BigPond brands in music, gaming, movies and sport, Sensis MediaSmart, CareerOne, The World Wildlife Fund and Toyota.

Shanelle has seen the digital media landscape from all angles with experience on agency, client and publisher side as well as spending some time in the not-for-profit sector.

Shanelle and Parachute Digital believe its important to develop digital strategies that take a 360 degree approach. This means we not only plan for the consumer marketing but also the resources, systems and infrastructure that is required to provide the best possible experience for the user as well as a streamlined process for the business. Investing in the up front business analysis ensures that when the digital marketing is delivering strong results, the business can scale up effortlessly.

If your business is in need of some digital guidance, contact Parachute Digital today.

# Content

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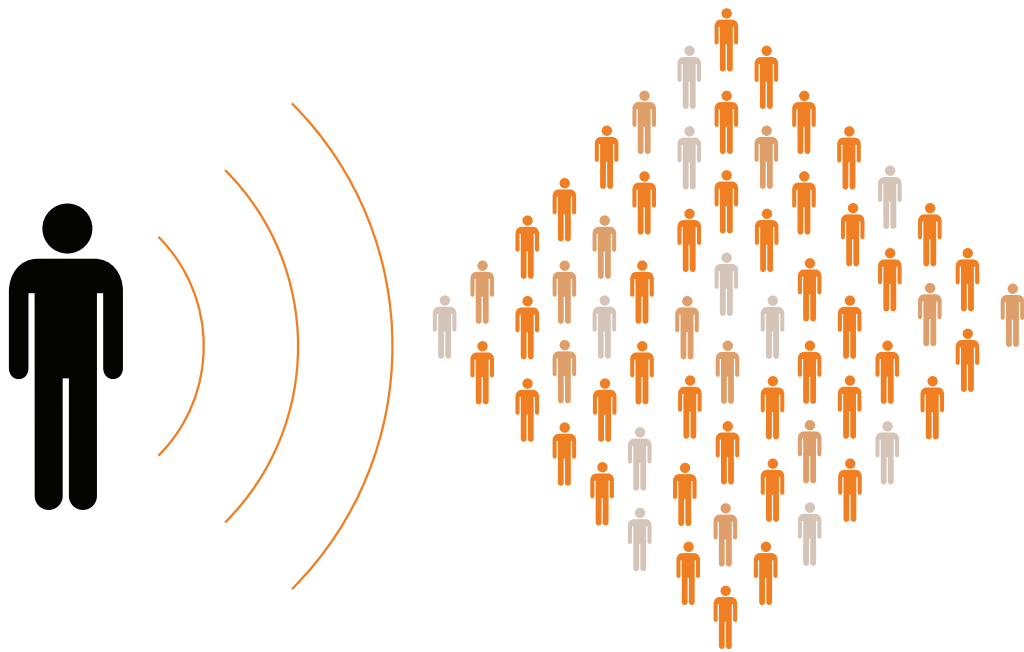
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# Really, what is social media?

Social Media is the name marketers use to describe the global digital movement that has seen people from all over the world come together, via a collection of websites, to share their thoughts and experiences with friends, colleagues and strangers. These collection of websites have been labeled "social networking" sites. This description is far closer to the truth than "Social Media", in my opinion. You may already know and use some of these social networking websites in your own life - sites such as Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, Stumble Upon, Pinterest and many, many more.

Within the digital media industry, we have created other terms that cross over with Social Media, such as "user generated content". For a website to fit the criteria of a social networking site, it must offer its services for free and allow its users to create and publish content on the internet. This content can come in various forms, such as images & photos, videos, animations and graphics and of course, words.

Social Media was born when marketers realised the potential of social networking sites to allow them to have a more personal, two-way conversation with their existing customers and reach new potential audiences. It was called "Social" because of the casual and conversational nature of the online environment and "media" because it has become an independent marketing channel that requires a budget. Businesses can create profiles to enable two-way conversations between brand and customer thus establishing a channel where the voice of the consumer can be heard.

**Social Media is in essence a place for people to talk, participate, share, network and collect 'things' online.**

# Which websites qualify as social media?

Social networking websites offer a free service to their members and as is often the case, the website survives from the revenue generated by advertising. Like individuals, brands such as Nike or Toyota are also offered free profiles on these social websites. Brands can use a variety of tactics to grow their fan-base, one of which is paid advertising, the other is through engaging content. The second is usually more beneficial for the long-term success of a Social Media strategy because it builds a relationship with the community, earning their trust and giving them some value just for joining.

Due to the public nature of Social Media and the transparency users expect from it, advertisers find themselves in a position they haven't been in previously. For all of the benefits Social Media provide to marketers, there are some considerable drawbacks. Companies are used to dealing with customer complaints but they're not accustomed to it happening in the public forum, in real time for all to read and see. To manage this exciting and volatile social environment, businesses need to have a solid communications and content strategy and be prepared with customer service process flows and moderation plans, should some unwanted, but inevitable, criticism or commentary be aired. It is often the case that what happens in Social Media can be picked up by mainstream media and can quickly turn into negative PR.

Websites or online platforms that make up the Social Media channel include blogs (diary form websites where people can post their life, art, work and opinions), forums (group message boards where people can ask questions and get answers from a community of others who may have something in common), file sharing websites (began as illegal communities who were uploading copyrighted materials [such as movies and music] for others to download but there are now some legitimate subscription sites), podcasts (audio and/ or video files that are distributed regularly as a free or paid subscription. Can be independent content but most often from TV and radio shows) and video publishing sites like YouTube and Vimeo. Social networking sites are mostly well known, such as Facebook and MySpace as well as micro-blogging platforms (that only allow very small amounts of information to be shared at any one time – such as 140 characters) like Twitter and the popular bookmarking websites like Delicious and Digg that allow you to save the address of websites, webpages and stories that you discover online and want to be able to come back to later. These social platforms can then be integrated into your existing online communication tools - most commonly, your website, to create a truly engaging user experience for your customers. Because of the ongoing commitment that this type of communication strategy requires of a brand to its audience, Social Media and blogging specifically can sometimes be known as 'earned media'.

Earned media revolves around content, conversations, PR and word of mouth. A brand can claim earned media when their customers and advocates start creating content and spreading their message for them.

# Social media can be both earned and paid for

There are now three core segments within the digital media industry – Owned, Earned and Paid media. This way of describing media is relatively new, but I think it's very apt because it does represent the effort that goes into the management of Social Media as a marketing channel. If the terminology is new to you, Owned media are your company assets such as your website, iPad or iPhone app or if you're a TV or newspaper publisher, your owned assets might be editorial or your in-house ad spots. Paid media is fairly self-explanatory, these are advertisements that are paid for – your traditional television commercial, online display banner ad or Google Adwords paid search text links.

Earned media revolves around content, conversations, PR and word of mouth. A brand can claim earned media when their customers and advocates start creating content and spreading their message for them. We can't say that there is no cost because content creation and curation takes many staff hours and sometimes production budget (think video), but there is no paid ad space acquired. Earned media leverages off engagement in free spaces, such as social networking websites.



**110 MILLION**  
ACTIVE USERS



Myspace

**900 MILLION**  
ACTIVE USERS



Facebook

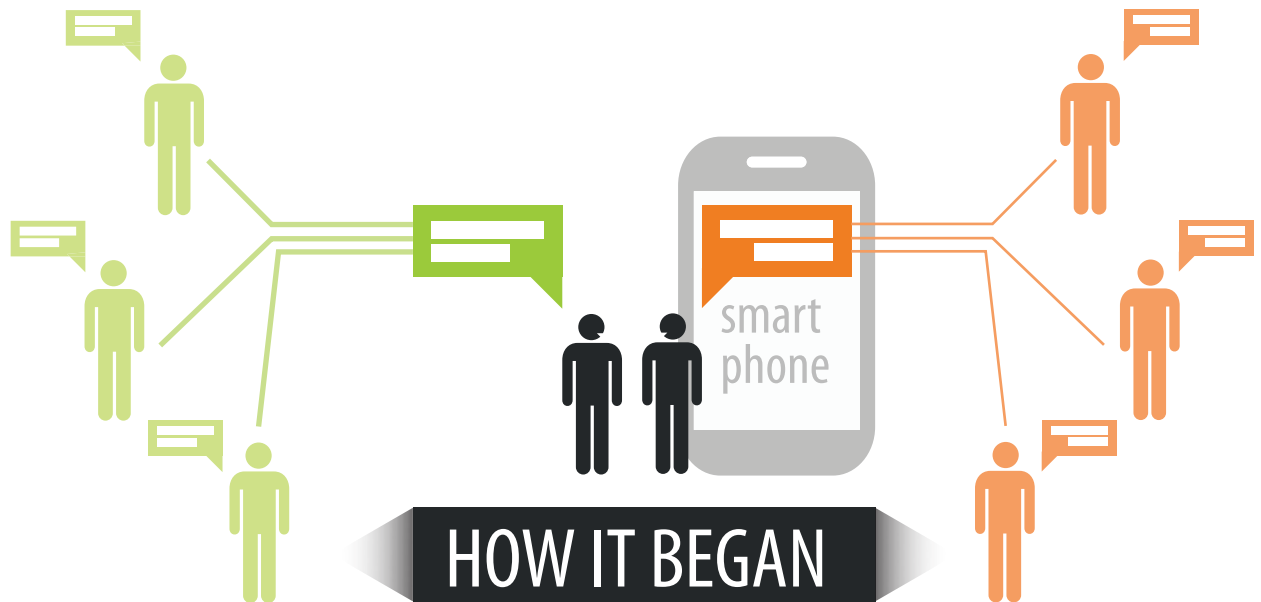
## Marketers realised the huge potential

A digital marketer is responsible for turning your content and business social profile into Social Media. Marketers saw the incredible potential these websites and platforms could offer advertisers - a highly engaged audience with a voice. If looking for a definition of Social Media from a marketer's point of view, Brian Solis (the principal analyst at Altimetre Group, author, blogger and speaker) says it very well "Social Media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism, one-to-many, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers."

There will be many differences of opinion as to which website pioneered the mass-market take-up of Social Media. There was Napster, a music file sharing website in the early 2000's and there was Friendster, who helped people reconnect with their old high school and university friends. But I think it was MySpace that catapulted Social Media into the full frontal awareness of marketers, with its ability to connect brands with millions of young people every day.

It's now undeniable that Facebook is the King of the social space. At the publishing of this paper (2012) If you are a business looking to connect with your existing customers (and some new people) via Social Media, the next section gives you some really important things you need to know when setting up your Social Media strategy. This information will help you reach the right people in the right way and hold onto them. Engagement is the key to success in the Social Media space. MySpace only reached 110 million monthly active users worldwide at its peak in 2007 before Facebook overtook them as the most visited website on the internet in mid 2008. Facebook has over 900 million active members (ComScore The Power of Like Report May 2011).

If you are a business looking to connect with your existing customers (and some new people) via Social Media, the next section gives you some really important things you need to know when setting up your Social Media strategy. This information will help you reach the right people in the right way and hold onto them. Engagement is the key to success in the Social Media space.



# Social media is a newer version of word of mouth

The success of the Social Media space is in its power to create customers who create customers. Instead of the broadcast model of one-to-many, brands can now communicate to a wider audience through Social Media sharing, in the much more efficient model of many-to-many.

Over the years this many-to-many strategy has been responsible for the longevity of thousands of sustainable business models. Small businesses have long relied on people experiencing their products or service and telling their friends and family about it to keep the doors open.

We used to call it word of mouth. Now we have word of mouth and Social Media. They are not exactly the same thing but stem from the same idea.

**The success of the Social Media space is in its power to create customers who create customers.**

Social Media can amplify your brand's messages through good old fashion word of mouth - but online.

Because of this, digital marketing rhetoric is evolving. Now we say "If content is king, then distribution is god almighty." Social Media creates a potentially infinite distribution channel for branded content. If you can get your content to the right influencers who have large audiences, and if it is engaging enough for them to want to share it, you have the potential to create the buzz you need to generate website visitors, foot traffic, brand advocates and inevitably the subsequent business desired awareness, action or sales.



What to Post?

Will my friends like this?



Every tweet, post or share that a person puts out into the digital world is a reflection on them.

# You are what you share

In Social Media, individuals have to be mindful of their own personal brand - this is their name, face and reputation. Every tweet, post or share that a person puts out into the digital world is a reflection on them, so the content you give them to share needs to be something they are happy to be associated with. Businesses and brands need to remember this when asking people to share their content.

Marketers want their brand to be perceived in a positive light and for their audience to pass the message on to their friends. But no brand can be all things to all people all of the time, and there will be times when the message delivered is not well received.

Because of this, some fans of your brand and influencers that you are targeting to get your message out there, may choose not to share the story because it does not resonate with them or does not live up to their expectations of the brand, or sometimes simply doesn't sit well with the individual's values. As marketers, we need to endeavor to be storytellers with our messaging if we are going to make an emotional connection with our audience. The hope is that they will feel inspired and invest enough to pass the message on to their friends, colleagues and followers.

# Social success is not just being 'in the space'

Because of the potential of Social Media to reach large amounts of people in a short time, a lot of brands are dabbling in social to some extent. Many of these businesses are jumping in feet first without considering the unwritten rules of the channel (such as not claiming other brand's content or graphics as your own or allowing other seemingly unrelated businesses access to your community). It's almost essential that businesses keep in mind the end user's expectations and perceptions when they're engaging with your company within Social Media, as misusing the medium may have longer-term implications for your brand.

On the surface, Social Media looks really easy to do. Some people think that all you need is a promotion (a message or call to action), a website

to link through to and someone to post updates a few times a day. Because of this cavalier attitude towards Social Media, sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are full of corporate profiles with either a) no fans and no engagement or b) lots of fans, lured in by the brand they love or a short term promotion or through Facebook advertising and then no real ongoing engagement once the campaign has ended. This results in a poor brand experience and a disappointed fan. What you really want is c) an engaged and interactive social community. The brands that have been successful in Social Media achieve an ongoing relationship with their audience regardless of the specific campaign or execution currently being promoted.

GRRRR



Shanelle Kari Newton Clapham

HOW CAN I GET THROUGH TO CANCEL MY MEMBERSHIP? I have tried the website but can't do it there. I've called head office every day for the last week and have been on hold for 10 minutes then told "there are larger than usual call volumes, please try again later" - why not tell me that at the beginning. Then I call my local gym where I signed up and they say I have to talk to HQ, they'll put me through to a direct line and I go straight into the same queue as before. I've been a member for over a year, I know I need to give 4 weeks notice and you're making it so hard. I've injured myself and haven't been for 4 months after going DAILY, please contact me so I can cancel!

Like · Comment · 20 hours ago ·



Fitness First Australia Hi Shanelle, a member of our customer service team will get in touch with you right away. Thanks  
20 hours ago · Like



Shanelle Kari Newton Clapham I have just recieved a call and I must say I am super impressed to get a call so quickly. The guy I spoke to was helpful, apologetic and gave me several options to best help me out. This quick response has completely diffused my anger and f...

See more  
20 hours ago · Like

Write a comment...

I UNDERSTAND

THANKS

# Service provided where the customers are

There are some businesses that have found a successful way of using Social Media profiles - as a customer service channel. Due to the public and passive nature of Social Media, a brand's profile can quickly become a place for customers to ask questions as well as vent their frustrations. Some Australian examples of companies using Social Media for customer service are Fitness First, Virgin Australia and the Commonwealth Bank. Visit the Facebook or Twitter profiles for any of these brands and you will find hundreds of examples where they have responded quickly, provided more information, solved problems or commiserated with their customers.

Using Social Media for customer service is a smart strategy because those complaints and conversations will be happening anyway. By addressing the customer's concern in an open forum, a negative experience may be turned into a positive one. A good example is an experience I had with Fitness First. I was extremely frustrated at not being able to get through to cancel my gym membership after injuring myself. After a week of calling and waiting on hold, I finally vented my frustration on the Fitness First Facebook page. They contacted me within 20 minutes of posting the message and resolved the situation. Because of this service, Fitness First was able to turn a very bad brand experience into an experience I share and talk about in a positive light.

The FANS of these brand pages see companies being open, honest and helpful and it might be the cause of turning that individual from a fan into a brand advocate who actively promotes the products or services of your company. I believe using Social Media as a customer service channel is an excellent way of providing a service to your customers as well as a smart risk management & customer retention strategy. Customer service also integrates Social Media into your business processes and brand communication mix.

Embracing Social Media into your business and resourcing it properly does not just create communication and sales opportunities; it also performs the task of reputation management. Your business may do the analysis and decide that Social Media is not a viable marketing channel for your customers, but that does not mean that people will not be talking about you. Watching and listening to social conversations relevant to your industry will be a valuable investment. Often consumers and customers will compare businesses and brands when researching online. They will gather information and garner the opinions of experts and friends. If and when your business is mentioned, just being aware of the conversation in real time will provide you with choices as to how to react, rather than being caught unawares. The cost to develop some Social Media moderation and response guidelines for your business will quickly pay for itself in the event of a crisis averted.

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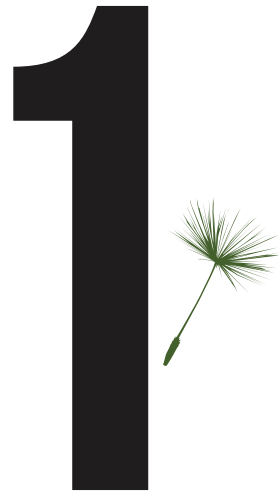
**4 THINGS**  
**YOU NEED TO**  
**GET RIGHT FOR**  
social media  
*success*

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Brands must have **long term** communications strategy.

## Social media is not a campaign with a start & end date



Social Media is a commitment, not a campaign. The internet is turned on 24/7 so Social Media is in the market on a permanent basis. If your business built a social community during an advertising campaign, you can't just ignore it when the campaign has finished. You have a responsibility to the engaged audience that you have built and created. You asked people to get involved and listen to what you had to say, and they did. These communities have been made to feel that they are a part of something bigger, so when a business neglects their social customers when the campaign finishes, they naturally feel let down when they are suddenly no-longer a priority. And like word of mouth, they tell their friends about their experiences.

For Social Media success, brands must have a long-term communications strategy. Generally what happens is that once the campaign has ended, the community interaction becomes zero because the advertisers' campaign resources have been diverted to the next campaign. It's not a positive brand experience to click on an ad and land on a Facebook page that has had no activity for weeks or months. Or even worse, when there are questions posed by supporters only to be left unanswered. This is a poor brand experience for all involved.

Many corporate clients ask me for a 'Social Media: How To Guide' that they can follow, however, unfortunately, I can't provide them with this. There is no fool-proof checklist of mandatory inclusions for Social Media because there are so many different Social Media platforms, various social networking websites and an array of ways to integrate 'social' into your business' website as well as your offline marketing and events. It's important to think about your brand personality and values. What works for one will not work for all. But there are some clear principles your business can follow; be authentic, be as honest and transparent as your executive team will allow, respect your audience and their intelligence, invest in content and community and focus on quality, not quantity. All of these are outlined in the tips below.

**..there are some clear principles your business can follow; be authentic; be as honest and transparent as your executive team will allow; respect your audience and their intelligence; invest in content and community and focus on quality, not quantity.**



# The conversation needs to be energised

Social Media is not a 'set and forget' marketing tool. You cannot create the social space and then expect people to come and talk among themselves and expect that it's all positive. Someone has to start the conversation and then keep it energised when it starts to wane - or know when to end one conversation and move into another. If your business invests in a Content

Marketing Lead or Community Manager, this person will be able to monitor conversations, respond with more information when the brand is challenged and most importantly, get involved and become part of the conversation rather than acting only as a moderator.

## COMMUNITY MANAGER

Moderator

Content Creator

Curator

Conversation Starter

Diplomat

**THE GOAL**

like a Mama Bear



# COMMUNITY MANAGER

Example



Peter Cashmore

SHOULD HAVE  
Identifiable Face/Name  
< face of Mashable

## A community & content curator

For your business to be truly engaging and encourage participation in the social space, your content and its author need to be real, and available. Your Community Manager should be an individual who is identifiable, by face and name, and wants to be known by and engage with the community's members. And I know it sounds corny, but your Community Manager must want to change the lives of members in some small way. They have to care and be committed.

I cannot stress enough how important it is that you have an identifiable person as your Community Manager. Having a real person available and accountable to your fans sends a message to your community that the individual and the brand are committed to the journey and that they are comfortable being open and transparent as you've provided your community with a personal point of contact. As a result, your social community will feel empowered and know that they can hold your business accountable for the promises it makes to your customers in the online space.

I believe a Community Manager should be responsible for finding, creating and curating content. This content will be shared with the group, used to start conversations, moderating questions and complaints. However some businesses structure the role of the Community Manager differently – for instance some Community Manager's do not create content, they only curate the conversations happening online. It's also important to note that often Community Manager's are not approved spokespeople for an organisation. They are instead someone who is skilled in trying to change and manage input happening in other forums outside a businesses own social profile.

Whoever is managing your Social Media profiles, inspiring conversations outside of your businesses owned assets or moderating your website comments, reporting is important. In Social Media there are reporting tools that can measure the sentiment surrounding your brand in the social space and the success of the content you're publishing. Moderation definitely needs to be part of your business risk management policy but that is not the core purpose of a Community Manager. I have outlined many of the Community Manager's responsibilities above - they must do more than simply moderate and censor unfavourable comments.

If your business is serious and wants to be successful in Social Media, you must invest in a Content Marketing Lead, the Community Manager. Engaging and moderating social communities is a skill and you need a person who believes in providing exceptional customer service and is passionate about the social space. Most businesses make the mistake of adding community management as a new task to an existing marketing staff member's job description, but if they don't understand the space, they can quickly become overwhelmed and make errors in judgment. It's also important not to underestimate or devalue Social Media and give the responsibility to a junior staff member. Junior staff do not always have enough brand knowledge or business experience to make the right decisions. In such a highly visible, public space, you need to make sure you have the right type of person making business decisions and wording responses that will live in a public forum. In many instances, Social Media community management requires finesse and a careful turn of phrase.

# Creating content & conversations

Social conversations have to be curated and energised. Depending on your cause, product or brand, this curation of conversations may be frequent or occasional, but the requirement is never absent. HubSpot, an online marketing blog, is known by many in the industry as the best practice example of Social Media engagement.

HubSpot have set the bar high - they keep their community engaged with 3 daily blog posts and a constant barrage of digital marketing eBooks as well as responding to their reader's questions and comments. For their efforts, they are rewarded with over 10,000 inbound links to their blog (inbound links are text links that other websites have created on their webpages to link back to HubSpot and acknowledge them as the source of the information they are discussing). These links are boosting HubSpot's traffic from search engines and referring websites beyond their wildest dreams, and they are doing it without spending even \$1 in above-the-line mainstream advertising (like TV, newspapers, magazines etc). In actual fact, HubSpot barely spend any money at all in advertising, their content has proven so valuable that they don't need to.



It's important to remember that Social Media is about content and conversations and this requires curation, collaboration and participation. Whether the participation is passive or active, whether your audience is incentivised, entertained or inspired to contribute, they are probably a community much larger than the group of people who have LIKED your page or who have chosen to comment and engage with your brand publicly.

**Don't forget about the friends of your fans – this is where the real value of Social Media lies.**

By listening, understanding and engaging with your fans, they will reward you by amplifying your brand message with their networks.

Content curation and community engagement can be difficult. Striking the right balance between the tone of voice you're using, the information that your brand is sharing and the actions you ask of your community is an art form in itself. Inspiring people to participate and contribute can be frustrating – but this is where a flexible but strong content plan and reporting come into play. By measuring what content gets the best response from your audience, you can begin to deliver information that is welcomed by your community.

On a personal note, I am lucky if I get 2 comments a week on my blog. I know that people are visiting my website because I can see the traffic stats in Google Analytics. I can tell that 40% of visitors come back to read my articles more than once a month, but very few people email, call or comment. I have a similar challenge



I'll keep posting and educating and entertaining my followers and keep encouraging them to contribute to the public conversation.



On my Facebook page. I can see from Google Analytics that Facebook (and Facebook mobile) is the referring website where I get the most visitors from, but again, I receive only occasional likes or comments on posts and infrequent sharing.

From the communities that I have been a part of and managed, I know that images tend to elicit the strongest engagement. People love cute, funny, embarrassing, painful and fun images. It doesn't seem important if the image is related to your brand, product, service or area of expertise – it just needs to resonate with the audience. Video works in a similar way. Communities must prefer an entertaining or 'How To' video to a product & service video. But at the same time, they'd prefer a product & service video to having to read a page about that product or service. Outside of YouTube, video doesn't have the same level of engagement but its still a worthy piece of content. Blog posts and research are well liked, read and shared within Social Media, often this is highlighted with the precursor [STUDY] or [RESEARCH]. I am able to justify these claims because I have absolute data proof from Facebook Insights for pages (Facebook's reporting product which provides analytics on each piece of content you post and what clicks, shares, likes etc they get from your community) and from Google Analytics, for those who come through to my website.

But not everything you put out into the Social Media space works. I invest a lot of time writing educational and instructional blog posts to help people understand digital marketing better and at times it feels as though it falls on deaf ears. And it can be discouraging at times when there is little public commentary on the work I put out into the world. But I can see the visitors that come from Social Media. I know that my community is reading and learning, they just choose not to comment or go back and like the post. Because I am a small business and just one person I am not able to employ a Community Manager yet. So that means that I can't achieve everything I want to within Social Media - but I'll keep posting and educating and entertaining my followers and keep encouraging them to contribute to the public conversation.



**GOOD COMMUNITY**

Manager



Knows how to read the tone of a situation and only get involved when asked, expected or required.

## Brand advocates as moderators

We all want a healthy, vibrant social community but sometimes we have to accept that some participants will want to share and inspire while others only want to observe and admire. And let's be honest, some people just want to complain, mock and ridicule but don't worry, these are generally just the vocal minority and the community will deal them with. You will notice that the Community Manager and moderator will rarely need to intervene. When you empower your fan-base they become emotionally attached and protective and if they feel that their beloved brand is being treated unfairly, they will come to your defence. A good Community Manager

knows how to read the tone of a situation and only get involved when asked, expected or required. Because they are part of the community, they will be able to see the difference between a constructive debate and a heated argument.

## An empowered community & manager

Your Content Marketing Lead will ensure that there is always new and relevant content to share with your social community. They will be the one to start the conversation and actively engage with individuals within the community to show that they care and have been listening. Your Community Manager will also have to take on the role of moderation when things occasionally get nasty, but you'll find these instances are few and far between and remember, the most vocal and

sometimes abusive customers are usually the ones that care the most. We can learn from the questions and complaints that fans post on Social Media - allow your Community Manager to do their job and you will gain more Social Media benefits than you suffer losses.



# 3

# Understanding why people engage With your business profile

What marketers want from Social Media is not the same as what consumers want. Marketers don't use Social Media in the same way as consumers and they don't have the same expectations. Marketers want "reach and awareness" from their Social Media campaigns. Most consumers wouldn't even really know what those terms mean. People use Social Media because that's where they can connect with their friends. They LIKE brands and businesses because they want exclusives, first look previews, special offers, discounts and entertainment. And then there are those people who might align themselves with a particular brand because its matches their public persona.

For many marketers, Social Media is viewed as a marketing tactic for a promotion or advertising campaign, not as an ongoing media channel. This is where they go wrong.

*Exclusive*  
**DISCOUNTS**

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**SPECIAL OFFERS**

**FIRST LOOK PREVIEW**



# Listen & learn

Your business has to be able to understand what your customers needs are and what they want from interactions with your brand? If you can really understand this, you will at the very least be able to provide them with content that will be interesting to them, as well as relevant to your business. To do this, you need to start by listening.

Listen first and find out what people are saying about your brand. This could take months. Sign up as an individual for Twitter and Pinterest and Stumble Upon and follow, subscribe or add your competitors, the brands you love and any brands that you see are active in the social space. To watch and learn you don't have to monitor only competitors in your own space, watch other industries as well. Be patient and see what happens when there is positive media and buzz - around your brand or someone else's. Get

involved. Make comments. Ask questions and challenge your favourite brands to see how they respond. Listen to what people are saying when something doesn't go to plan and there is negative chatter. See how the business responds, note how quickly or slowly it is. Pay attention to the type of language the brand uses and where they link their fans to for more information.

Start recording what you're seeing. Create daily, weekly and monthly sentiment reports, the positive and negative mentions - for your brand and for your competitors. Use search Twitter.com to see what people are saying about your brand at any given moment.

**Listen first and find out what people are saying about your brand.**

# Getting the message right

Marketers can see the huge potential of Social Media to drive awareness and brand engagement for a reasonably low cost. What they often forget is the time it takes to grow the size of the community – if you're growing it organically of course (not paying for your LIKES and follows). Their goal is to create 'stickiness' through Social Media, driving users to consume their content – be it promotional, video, images or text. 'Stickiness' means that the audience comes back again and again. However, to achieve stickiness, one's content must be of interest to the community. This is where it gets tricky because as I've said earlier, what the brand wants to get out of the social experience is very different to what the community want. Finding the sweet spot in-between the two is where the magic is.

Consumers want to see something funny, they want to get a discount or they want product or services information.

The hard part for a business is to create interesting content about their product or service that will resonate with the community, content that will make them laugh or cry or cringe, content that they are inspired by or find interesting enough to send it on. Coming up with that piece of creative, a specific message that gives the customer what they want whilst also supporting what the marketer needs to achieve their end goal (increased awareness or increased sales) is often a matter of trial and error. You won't know if your content meets the criteria until it works, or fails.

## First ask the questions of yourself

To have a successful Social Media presence, brands need to figure out who their ideal consumer is. Research by ComScore (a world leading company who provides online research and measurement) shows that a brand's Social Media community can differ greatly from their traditional audience. The business needs to ask itself some seemingly very simple questions, but you'll quickly find that they're not that simple to answer in a way that serves both the marketer and the customer's needs.

These business questions might include; "Does my customer want to receive messages via Social Media?"

If you believe the answer is yes and have some evidence to support that, then you need to ask yourself "What kind of information is relevant to my customer within the Social Media context?"

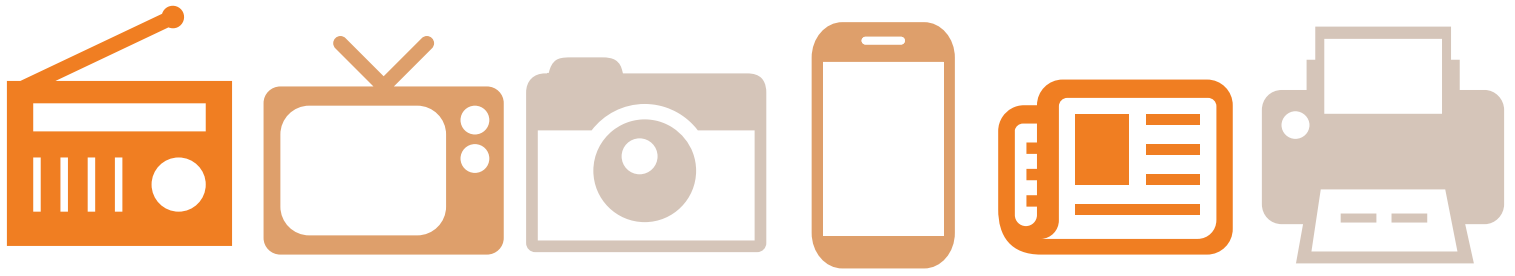
And if you can answer that with a "yes", you will need to start creating a library of content. Once you have your content and messaging plan, then you proceed down the path of questions to find

out "How often do our customers want to receive messages through Social Media?" and this will require some testing and measurement to know for sure because what people say they want and what works can be different.

An important question internally within your business is "Who is the right person to be delivering our Social Media messages?" and don't shy away from the uncomfortable questions like "What do we do if our community want to have a conversation we don't?"

Your business should be asking itself these questions during the listening stage of the Social Media strategy.

While you're watching how your competitors and other industries handle their Social Media communities, you will find that many of these questions will be answered in the early stages so you'll be prepared when you start to engage with your own community.



# Social media is not a stand alone channel

Learn how other media, like TV commercials or newspaper editorials, impacts the Social Media space. And make sure you're watching when your competitors handle similar situations, good and bad.

And please, don't execute anything in Social Media until you know what your consumers are saying, feeling and what the sentiment for your brand is first. If you know these things before you even start publicly engaging with a community of your own brand, you'll be able to interact with them in the way they expect, anticipate the difficult questions and be ready with a considered response every time. Being able to prepare in advance for the types of unwanted questions you might get and having a calendar of content

ready to go shows that you have thought about what your community wants from your business and you are prepared to give it to them. And if the content you have prepared is not working, ask your community what they would like to see and then follow through and give it to them.

SHARING

ENGAGEMENT

FOLLOWERS

LIKES

# Measuring against the right KPIs

4

If Social Media is a viable marketing channel for your business, it needs to be treated as any other media channel and measured against KPIs and the return on investment (ROI), even if that investment is just head count hours – that's still time and energy away from other business priorities. But your Social Media KPIs, reporting and measurement need to be realistic and specific to the space. If you haven't done any reporting on Social Media before, I suggest you start by conducting a competitive analysis and use this to create a benchmark report for your industry and then set your KPIs against this. If you've documented what you saw in the listening stage, you should have a good idea of your Social Media KPIs and the direction you want to take your Social Media strategy.

Social Media is absolutely about quality over quantity. Please don't make the mistake of measuring the effectiveness of Social Media by the number of fans, likes, followers or connections you have for each profile – this is the wrong thing to be reporting against. To truly evaluate the value of Social Media you should be measuring

the number of mentions your brand gets and the sentiment of those mentions – whether they are positive, neutral or negative. Map out your advocates and detractors and understand why they feel the way they do towards your brand. Find out if any of your advocates are influential (with large followings of their own) and maximize their networks.

You can monitor engagement and the exposure of your brand by the shares you get and the friends of fans that you reach – this is how you uncover your true audience. Engagement can be measured by comments on your pages, responses to tweets, hash tag counts (hash tags provide a way for people to show their interest in a Social Media conversation. I would use the #SocialMedia hash tag when posting a message about Social Media in Twitter), retweets (re-posting someone else messages to your followers), shares and on page like's, +1's and pins (a way to post an image to your online virtual cork board to save for later).

**To truly evaluate the value of Social Media you should be measuring the number of mentions your brand gets and the sentiment of those mentions.**

# The consideration cycle

Social Media effectiveness (ROI) should be tracked all the way back to new fans. Interest and enquiries of your brand are great but if it doesn't create revenue for your business, even indirectly, then you have to assess whether it's worth it. The thing to be careful of is allowing enough time to make this assessment. If your business is focused around sales, products or services, of course you're going to want to understand if your Social Media presence is contributing to any uplift you may have had. But on the flip side,

**If you are spending considerable resources on Social Media with no measurable return to show for it, perhaps its time to re-evaluate your current strategy & messaging.**

Most importantly, if you have the tools, pay close attention to the user journey and customer consideration cycle and Social Media's role in this. Effective measurement helps you understand which media channel is the most successful at getting your brand, product or service included in the customer's consideration set. Knowing Social Media's role will help you identify if Social Media is the first contact your business has with a person in the online world or the last.

Being able to map if your first touch point with a customer was through Social Media, a paid search ad, an email newsletter that had been forwarded, or an online banner ad, can tell you a lot about how your advertising and marketing efforts are working. Many businesses make the mistake of attributing all online sales or conversions to the last touch point, known as the "last click". The last click might be what delivered the actual sale but it is unlikely that this was the message that started the customer's consideration of your brand, product or service. One of the first clicks is most often the influential touch

point that caused the then potential customer to consider your brand or product in the first place. The last click is simply the facilitation part of the process that aided the customer to make the final action – be it a newsletter subscription, an eBook download or sale.

This information is called 'the first and last click attribution'. This kind of tracking can provide you with important insight into where to focus your budget and resources. Monitoring the first and last click attribution can help you determine which channels drive volume into the top of the marketing and sales funnel and also the marketing efforts that generate the final conversion. It is also essential to cross-reference your email, direct mail and Social Media databases against one another wherever you can. It is important to know if the people who make up your Social Media community are the same people as those in your email subscriber database. As I mentioned previously, there is evidence to suggest that brands attract a different audience via Social Media and this creates new opportunities for your business to expand. But it also means that your messaging may need to vary to cater for this unique Social Media audience.

Social Media is usually somewhere in the middle of this consideration buying cycle - after the customer was initially exposed to the brand, during the research phase.

**Many businesses make the mistake of attributing all online sales or conversions to the last touch point, known as the "last click". The last click might be what delivered the actual sale but it is unlikely that this was the message that started the customer's consideration of your brand, product or service.**



# You're in a relationship with your customer

Social Media is about creating a two-way conversation and being in the place where consumers are talking about your brand, be those conversations good or bad. It's like any relationship, you have to take the highs with the lows to build trust & loyalty. Social Media allows you to be aware of the issues early on, correct wrongs, defend yourself, offer solutions, be helpful and build a better relationship with your customer. Your Social Media strategy should always measure and evaluate success based on the sentiment of the brand mentions you're getting. Success can also be measured through the reach and shares that you're achieving through your community as well as the friends of those fans.

One of the best ways to measure Social Media is to track the increase in your industry share of voice online. If your business invests in sustained Social Media activity over a period of time, you can expect to see conversations and mentions of your brand, in Social Media, go up. There are tools such as Radian6 or BuzzMetrics to help you measure your Social Media engagement. But remember, Social Media doesn't necessarily increase the positive perception of a brand. This has to be earned through value provided to the consumer. Value can be discounts or special offers, entertaining content or just a meaningful interaction with a brand - all rolled up into engagement.

**Social Media is about creating a two-way conversation and being in the place where consumers are talking about your brand, be those conversations good or bad.**



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**SUMMARY**

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**SOCIAL MEDIA**

**IS JUST**

one piece

*of the puzzle*

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# Brands need a CONSISTENT VOICE



## Social media is not a stand alone channel

Remember, Social Media is just one part of the marketing communications mix.

**Social Media doesn't stand alone. Like all marketing channels, Social Media should be an integrated part of a larger communication mix.**

The messages shared through social should be in-line with and complimentary to the other messages in market, that may have been communicated through other broadcast channels such as television, outdoor and print as well as online.

Brands need a consistent voice, the specific words and creative of a campaign don't have to be exactly the same across all media channels and platforms, but the tone of the campaign and the message still need to be telling the same story. And trust me on this, if you don't get the messaging right, Social Media will be the first place that you'll hear about it.

A successful Social Media strategy is one that has a story to tell, has relevant content to support that story which can be shared with the branded

community, and will resonate with the members, making them want to pass on to their own friends and followers. Social Media is not a quick fix, it needs to be a long-term marketing strategy.

Social Media is known as earned media (as opposed to paid) and if you're doing it right, you will fully appreciate this phrase because it takes a lot of planning and effort to get social messaging right and earn unprompted positive sentiment from your communities. We are still figuring Social Media out. Human behavior is changing as technology improves and we are provided with more ways to access the internet and communicate with one another. Social Media won't be the low-cost, high-return silver bullet you've been hoping for to solve all of your marketing woes, but it is providing us with new and interesting ways to speak with our customers and encourage them to spend their time and money with us. Social Media provides a gateway into the lives of your customers, it allows you to become their friend, to ask their opinion, to support them and to understand them better. So go out there and start a Social Media conversation today ... but don't forget the lessons you've learn't here.



# Resources

**Shanelle Newton Clapham, Parachute Digital**

[www.ParachuteDigitalMarketing.com.au/blog](http://www.ParachuteDigitalMarketing.com.au/blog)

**Brian Solis Social Media definition**

<http://www.briansolis.com/2010/01/defining-social-media-the-saga-continues/>

**Facebook statistics: ComScore The Power of Like May 2011**

[http://www.comscore.com/layout/set/popup/Request/Presentations/2011/The\\_Power\\_of\\_Like\\_Report\\_Request](http://www.comscore.com/layout/set/popup/Request/Presentations/2011/The_Power_of_Like_Report_Request)

**MySpace active monthly users**

<http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2008/01/09/social-network-stats-Facebook-myspace-reunion-jan-2008/>



# Parachute Digital

Guiding you through the digital landscape

## About this book

In this book you are going to first learn the basics about Social Media and social networking. I'll help you understand what type of websites and content make up Social Media, what the benefits are and how Social Media differs from other types of digital media. I will also give you some useful examples of how other businesses are currently using Social Media. Then in the second half of this book you will learn four very important things to take into consideration and remember when you or your agency are planning a Social Media strategy.